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## *CULTURAL RELATIVİSM: AS A METHODOLOGİCAL AND HEURİSTİC DEVİCE*

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### **Abstract**

The belief that a person's practices and beliefs should be understood in light of their own culture is known as cultural relativism. It was established as axiomatic in anthropological research by Franz Boas in the early 20th century and later popularized by his students. Proponents of cultural relativism also tend to argue that the norms and values of one culture should not be evaluated using the norms and values of another. The idea was first expressed by Boas in 1887: According to Boas, "civilization is not something absolute, but is relative, and our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes.

**Keywords:** Civilization, Philosophy

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Philosopher and social theorist Alain Locke used the term for the first time in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1924 to describe Robert Lowie's "extreme cultural relativism" in his 1917 book Culture and Ethnology. After Boas's death in 1942, anthropologists began using the term to describe their synthesis of a number of his ideas. Cultural relativism is based on specific epistemological and methodological claims, and Boas was of the opinion that there could not be a connection between race and the scope of cultures found in connection with any subspecies. There is some debate regarding whether these assertions call for a particular ethical position. After World War II, cultural relativism became increasingly popular as a response to colonialism, ethnocentrism, racism, and historical events like Nazism.

Language is the most obvious example of this. Boas hypothesized that the existence of different languages suggests that people categorize and, as a result, experience language differently (this view was more fully developed in the hypothesis of Linguistic relativity), despite the fact that language is typically thought of as a means of communication. However, Boas specifically emphasized the idea that language is also a means of categorizing experiences.

### **2. DISCUSSION**

As a result, despite the fact that everyone sees visible light in the same way-as a continuum of colors-people who speak different languages divide this continuum into distinct colors in distinct ways. There is no word in some languages that is equivalent to the English word green. When a green chip is shown to people who speak these languages, some of them use their word for blue, while others use their word for yellow. Melville Herskovits, a Boas student, put the concept of cultural relativism as follows: Experience is the basis for judgments, and each person interprets experience according to his own enculturation.



Boas pointed out that scientists are naturally ethnocentric because they were raised and work in a particular culture. In his article "On Alternating Sounds" from 1889, he gave an example of this. At the time, a number of linguists had noticed that speakers of some Native American languages pronounced the same word with different sounds randomly. They took this as evidence that the languages were more primitive than their own and that they were unorganized and devoid of precise pronunciation rules. Boas, on the other hand, said that the different pronunciations were caused by the way these languages organized sounds differently than English, not by a lack of organization of sound patterns. In addition to having contrasts that were absent in English, the languages combined sounds that were regarded as distinct in English into a single sound. He then contended the case that Local Americans had been articulating the word being referred to the same way, reliably, and the variety was just seen by somebody whose own language recognizes those two sounds. Later, the linguist Edward Sapir, who was Boas' student, also made the observation that English speakers pronounce sounds in different ways even when they think they are saying the same thing. For instance, very few people who speak English are aware that the sounds written with the letter "t" in the words "tick" and "stick" are phonetically distinct, with the first sound typically being aspirated and the second sound being unaspirated; A speaker of a language with this contrast would immediately recognize them as distinct sounds and not as distinct realizations of the same phoneme.

Boas' understudies didn't draw just on his commitment with German way of thinking. In an effort to move, in the words of Boas's student Robert Lowie, "from a naively metaphysical to an epistemological stage," they also engaged the work of contemporary philosophers and scientists such as Karl Pearson, Ernst Mach, Henri Poincaré, William James, and John Dewey.

Boas and his students came to the realization that in order for them to carry out scientific research in other cultures, they would need to employ strategies that would enable them to break free from the limitations imposed by their own ethnocentrism. Ethnography is one such approach: Basically, they advocated spending time with people from another culture so they could learn the language and become enmeshed, at least in part, in that culture.

Because it emphasizes the significance of the local context in comprehending the meaning of particular human beliefs and activities, cultural relativism is an attitude of fundamental methodological importance in this setting. As a result, Virginia Heyer wrote in 1948: To put it more succinctly, cultural relativity asserts that the parts are relative to the whole. The component cannot maintain its integrity in a different setting because its place in the whole gives it cultural significance.

While the exotic and out-of-the-way were a part of the early interest in so-called social culture science anthropology, even this antiquarian motivation ultimately contributed to a broader outcome. The variety of cultures became apparent to anthropologists. They started to notice the enormous variety of its variants. They began to view it as a whole as a result, something that no historian of a single era or people, nor analyst of a single type of civilization, was likely to do. They realized that culture was a vast "universe," or field, of which our own civilization and we are just one part. The result was a shift away from unconscious ethnocentricity toward relativity and an expansion of a fundamental perspective. Similar to the transition from the initial geocentric assumption of astronomy to the Copernican interpretation of the solar system and the subsequent even greater widening to a universe of galaxies, this shift from naive self-centeredness in one's own time and place to a broader perspective based on objective comparison is similar.

### 3. CONCLUSION

After certain initial propositions have been violently opposed, the study of custom can only be profitable. Any scientific study must, first and foremost, ensure that no items in the series it chooses for its consideration are given a preference. In every one of the less questionable fields like the investigation of prickly plants or termites or the idea of nebulae, the essential strategy for study is to bunch the important material and to observe all conceivable variation structures and conditions. We have learned everything we know about astronomical laws or, let's say, social insect behaviors in this manner. The major social sciences have only substituted the study of one local variation, Western civilization, for the study of man itself.

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